

INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

The two main components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), are based in Geneva. The ICRC helps victims of war and of international and internal armed conflict, while the IFRC brings relief to victims of both natural and man-made disasters and serves as the secretariat for national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies worldwide.



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The Red Cross concept of humanitarian service originated with Henry Dunant, a young Geneva businessman who witnessed firsthand the horrors of the battlefield at Solferino in 1859. The ICRC (originally called the “International Committee for Relief to the Wounded”) was created in 1863, with the idea of providing humanitarian assistance in time of war, civil war or internal strife. It became the founding organization of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. For more than 140 years; throughout two world wars and innumerable other conflicts; and in times of disaster, disease and famine; the Red Cross has alleviated the plight of many millions of people. Its internationally recognized flag (red cross on white background - the Swiss flag reversed) has enabled the ICRC to provide humanitarian aid to those who cannot always be reached by other relief services. (For the national societies of many countries in the Islamic world, the emblem is a red crescent on a white background.) The ICRC was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize

in 1917 and 1944; in 1963 the prize was awarded jointly to the ICRC and the IFRC. (Henry Dunant was the first recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1901.)

An International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, bringing together all elements of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (ICRC, IFRC, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and states parties to the Geneva Conventions), is held periodically to review the work of the Movement, and to discuss the major decisions to be adopted in the realm of international humanitarian law. The 27th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent was held in Geneva from October 31 to November 6, 1999. The conference focused on humanitarian action in times of armed conflict and other disasters. The 28th Conference is scheduled to take place in Geneva from 2 to 6 December 2003. The main theme of the Conference is “Protecting Human Dignity.” The conference is expected to adopt an Agenda for Humanitarian Action and pledges on individual and/or collective action by members of the Conference. The Conference will also elect the members of the Standing Commission for the term of office 2003-2007.